

Today's News - Friday, April 10, 2015

- Chipperfield's design for the new Nobel Center in Stockholm continues to stoke controversy: "We are paying close attention to the feedback, which will be considered in the design development of the project," sayeth the architect.
- Hosey would like to see more clarity in the "language shifting back and forth between fact and metaphor, life and 'like' life" when it comes to talking about "living buildings" and "green" design.
- Davies takes Mackay to task for his reasons behind believing humans aren't meant to live in high-rise towers: "There are potential problems with high-rises that must be managed. But the idea that towers are somehow unnatural for humans, or that they discourage human interaction, is just silly."
- Jaffe parses a study that finds the New Urbanist neighborhood of Stapleton, Colorado, may "look the part. But it doesn't function that way" because it "suffers from compromised planning standards."
- French ponders whether Toronto's 19 miles of "underground city" could be "a solution to crowded, dense megacities."
- Rotenberk digs deep into Chicago's "massive regreening - making up for the wrongs created by racism, rapid growth, and negligence" (some great history).
- Eyefuls of Denton Corker Marshall's white-box-in-a-black-box pavilion for the Venice Biennale.
- Gensler/HWKN's ziggurat-shaped "Williamsburg Generator" in Brooklyn would "momentarily" interrupt the "unceasing march of bland and boxy new apartments" in the nabe ("but it is not a done deal just yet").
- Capps and Lewis each offer very thoughtful takes on NORCs (naturally occurring retirement communities) that are "increasingly reshaping urban and suburban development."
- McGuigan waxes poetic about the "earthly paradise" that is Sea Ranch, 50 years later: "Though mankind's footprint on the land has occasionally been clumsy, the beauty of the wild acres of meadows and forests, the sea and the sky, triumph over all" (fab photos!).
- Weekend diversions:
 - Jaffe has a few issues with Gertten's new documentary, "Bikes vs. Cars": its "heavy-handed style often obscures - and occasionally even confuses - the real challenges" - its best moments "remind us the goal isn't (or shouldn't be) utter annihilation of automobiles, but a shift in transport balance and a general change in perspective."
 - "The Competition" is a "magical documentary" about a "doomed" museum competition with "starchitects behaving badly," and "just as fraught and dramatic as one might think" (the "F"-word - mon dieu!)
 - Stephens says "Sink or Swim: Designing for a Sea Change" at L.A.'s Annenberg Space for Photography "displays the guiltiest sort of beauty. The heroes - or, more cynically, the perverse beneficiaries - are engineers, urban planners, landscape architects and architects."
 - Heathcote and Bevan give (mostly) thumbs-up to "All This Belongs to You" at London's V&A: it is "hugely ambitious...an important, subtly subversive show" + It's "inventive" and "should not only wake up the museum zombies from their shuffle but also remind us that, as a public museum, all this does indeed belong to us. Which is an astonishing thought, really."
 - Bevan is less impressed with "Designs of the Year 2015" at the Design Museum: "A plethora of tech seems to spell the end for handcrafted beauty" (except for a bench).
 - Leon lauds McGuirk's "Radical Cities": it "should be required reading for anyone looking for ways out of the bleak social inequality we're stuck in" - it "gives us hopeful fragments."
 - Welton cheers Hardin Kapp's "The Architecture of William Nichols" that "shines a much-needed spotlight on a forgotten designer," and is "a must-read for neoclassical architecture fans."
 - A slide show essay from Johnson's "Improbable Libraries" that proves we're not really "falling out of love with books."

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David Chipperfield's Nobel Centre plans come under fire: Stockholm's City Museum has written to the local planning department calling on them to throw out plans...[it] would have a 'particularly large impact on heritage values and the local environment' and should be built elsewhere. A number of historic buildings...would be demolished to make way... [images]- The Architects' Journal (UK)

Can Architecture Come Alive? Could "living buildings" transcend metaphor? Words matter, and unclear terminology can alienate people, spread confusion, encourage co-optation and compromise credibility...If the Living Building Challenge represents advancement in the green building movement...shouldn't its terminology also signal progress by bringing greater conceptual clarity? By Lance Hosey/RTKL -- International Living Future Institute- Huffington Post

Are humans meant to live in high-rise towers? Social psychologist and author Hugh Mackay reckons Parramatta's plan to build more high-rise residential towers is a big mistake because it's not how humans are meant to live...that's a silly and reactionary argument...There are potential problems with high-rise like over-shadowing and ground level wind effects that must be managed...But the idea that towers are somehow unnatural for humans, or that they discourage human interaction...is just silly. By Alan Davies - Crikey (Australia)

A Case Study in Flawed Street Design: The New Urbanist neighborhood of Stapleton, Colorado, suffers from compromised planning standards: "In terms of the architecture and a lot of that stuff, it looks the part. But it doesn't function that way"...a cautionary tale about conforming to regional planning and traffic engineering standards that run counter to neighborhood goals. By Eric Jaffe -- Peter Calthorpe; Wesley Marshall [images]- CityLab (formerly The Atlantic Cities)

Toronto's underground city: It is one of the biggest underground spaces in the world, but does Toronto's PATH system offer a solution to crowded, dense megacities? It's more a conveyance than destination. Increasingly though, this web of 30 kilometres (19 miles) of interconnected commercial space...is becoming a tourist attraction in its own right...Love it or loathe it, there's a promise the next phase will be an improvement. By Paul French/Diamond Schmitt Architects - Guardian (UK)

In Chicago, parks are on the upswing: Jardincito is just one small piece of a massive regreening underway...driven by both community groups and government leaders...making up for the wrongs created by racism, rapid growth, and for negligence in the early 1980s...Chicago Plays! Program...set out to rejuvenate 500 neighborhood parks; so far, 300 have been completed. By Lori Rotenberk -- NeighborSpace; The Student Conservation Association; the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) [images]- Grist Magazine

New Australian Denton Corker Marshall pavilion for the Venice Biennale revealed: ...centres around the idea of a black box enclosing a smaller white box...the first national pavilion located in the Giardini della Biennale to be constructed in the 21st century...replaced Philip Cox's temporary 1988 building, which represented Australia for 26 years. [images]- ArchitectureAU (Australia)

Gensler and HWKN team up to bring a ziggurat-shaped office building to Williamsburg, Brooklyn: ...new office space for tech and creative companies - and momentarily interrupting its unceasing march of bland and boxy new apartments. The "Williamsburg Generator"...would be the neighborhood's first ground-up speculative office building in four decades - but it is not a done deal just yet... [images]- The Architect's Newspaper

What Have We Learned From 30 Years of 'Aging in Place'? A new study on "naturally occurring retirement communities" (NORCs) shows that cities must adapt to and support the needs of elders for them to thrive...isn't just a matter of building housing for retirees. It's about fostering supportive community structures that evolve with age. By Kriston Capps - CityLab (formerly The Atlantic Cities)

An organic way to meet the housing needs of older adults: NORCs - or naturally occurring retirement communities...where aging in place occurs organically...increasingly reshaping urban and suburban development. By Roger K. Lewis - Washington Post

An Earthly Paradise: In planning, design, and sustainability, the Sea Ranch, now 50 years old, was far ahead of its time: ...newcomers and long-time residents are still grappling with the ideals set forth by its original planner, Lawrence Halprin...Though mankind's footprint on the land has occasionally been clumsy, the beauty of the wild acres of meadows and forests, the sea and the sky, triumph over all. By Cathleen McGuigan -- Lawrence Halprin; Joseph Esherick; Donlyn Lyndon/Charles Moore/William Turnbull/Richard Whitaker/Moore Lyndon Turnbull Whitaker; Norman Millar/Judith Sheine [images] - Architectural Record

"Bikes vs. Cars" Wages the Wrong War: Fredrik Gertten's new documentary:...heavy-handed style often obscures - and occasionally even confuses - the real challenges in creating equitable transport systems...at its best...moments that remind us the goal isn't (or shouldn't be) utter annihilation of automobiles but a shift in transport balance in urban areas, a general change in perspective. By Eric Jaffe - CityLab (formerly The Atlantic Cities)

See Starchitects Behaving Badly in a New Documentary About a Doomed Museum Competition: ...this magical documentary actually exists...Directed by the Spanish architect Angel Borrego Cubero, "The Competition"...is just as fraught and dramatic as one might think. -- Frank Gehry; Zaha Hadid; Jean Nouvel; Norman Foster; Dominique Perrault - Curbed

Photos Signal Warning About a Future of Flooded Cities: "Sink or Swim: Designing for a Sea Change" at the Annenberg Space for Photography, Los Angeles...displays the guiltiest sort of beauty...Muscular engineering of the most inventive sort. Primitively endearing structures wrought by hand...The heroes of this upcoming fight - or, more cynically, the perverse beneficiaries - are engineers, urban planners, landscape architects and architects. By Josh Stephens -- Frances Anderton - Next City (formerly Next American City)

"All This Belongs to You" at London's V&A: ...an attempt to explore both the role of the museum in society and what it means to a citizen in the 21st century...hugely ambitious...an important, subtly subversive show..."Vendor Power"...developed by the Centre for Urban Pedagogy...to make urban life better...for the struggling immigrants and budding entrepreneurs who operate New York City's food carts...is the best thing in the architecture section...demonstrates quite how poor architects have been at addressing the real, everyday problems of the citizen and the landscape of micro-commerce... By Edwin Heathcote - Financial Times (UK)

"All of This Belongs to You," the V&A: ...an inventive new exhibition...At its best, this suite of inter-related installations should not only wake up the museum zombies from their shuffle but also remind us that, as a public museum, all this does indeed belong to us. Which is an astonishing thought, really. By Robert Bevan - Evening Standard (UK)

"Designs of the Year 2015" at the Design Museum, London: A plethora of tech seems to spell the end for handcrafted beauty, save for the fashion entries and a cleverly manufactured bench. By Robert Bevan - Evening Standard (UK)

Finding Radical Alternatives in Slums, Exurbs, and Enclaves: Justin McGuirk's travelogue through Latin America celebrates both ingenious bottom-up urban strategies and collaborative, top-down architectural design.: "Radical Cities: Across Latin America in Search of a New Architecture" should be required reading for anyone looking for ways out of the bleak social inequality we're stuck in...gives us hopeful fragments. By Joshua K. Leon - Metropolis Magazine

"The Architecture of William Nichols: Building the Antebellum South in North Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi" by Paul Hardin Kapp: ...shines a much-needed spotlight on a forgotten designer...a must-read for neoclassical architecture fans...effectively communicates a young nation's new and optimistic spirit, as seen through the eyes of a gifted and discerning architect. By J. Michael Welton - Charlotte Observer (North Carolina)

11 hidden libraries: "Improbable Libraries": With libraries shutting all over the country, it might seem that we are falling out of love with books. The opposite is the case, says Alex Johnson, as he picks some of the most unusual libraries around the world. -- Etat Arkitekter AB; BC Architects; 24H-architecture; Andreas Meichsner/ff-Architekten; Stereotank [images] - Telegraph (UK)



-- Atelier Peter Zumthor: His buildings stand out against their surrounding contexts, whether urban environments or natural landscapes, as statements of formal clarity. By Martin Søberg

-- Interview: Jacques Herzog: Herzog & de Meuron is one of the largest and currently, perhaps the most successful Swiss architectural practice...Q&A about his current trials and tribulations, as well as his influences and goals. By Ulf Meyer

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